Facilitator Guide:
INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND PRACTICES AT MƒA
Establishing Norms in Professional Learning Spaces

MƒA
For master teachers
of math and science
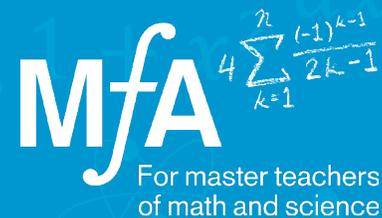
Establishing norms for our professional learning spaces is an important component of building a professional community.[1] At MƒA, our goal is to provide resources for facilitators to help them create equitable and inclusive learning spaces for all teachers who participate in professional learning.

Norms help workshop participants build capacity for taking risks as learners by:

- Encouraging them to reflect on their own understanding as well as on the ideas of others;
- Encouraging productive communication among group members; and
- Defining a common ground for communication, regardless of the diversity of the group.

Facilitators should establish norms, also referred to as community or group agreements, at the beginning of every course in order to provide a welcoming and productive environment for participants. Facilitators also take care in keeping norms visible and return to them often.

The resources provided below show how this can be done within various courses you may be facilitating at MƒA, distinguished by the length of time you have with the teachers. Longer workshops, such as PLTs or extended length courses, are places where norms may be co-constructed with teachers and revisited throughout the semester. In shorter workshops, such as mini-courses and single sessions, you may feel a time crunch that does not allow you to build norms organically. In these cases, you may choose a set of norms to support your participants in the learning experience you are planning.

Below you will find resources for the following aspects of establishing norms in professional learning spaces:

► **Co-Constructing Norms**

► **Presenting Norms**

► **Online Professional Learning Spaces**

► **Returning to Norms**

► **Continued Learning**

1 Garmston, R. J., & Wellman, B. M. (1999). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups.*
DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., Many, T. W., & Mattos, M. W. (2016). *Learning by doing: a handbook for professional learning communities at work.*

Co-Constructing Norms

In some cases, co-constructing norms in the learning space makes sense. For example, PLTs are opportunities for teachers to work together for an extended period of time, and spending time helping participants think about how they interact with each other can pay huge dividends. Since PLTs focus on the analysis of practice within participants' classrooms, norms allow teachers to feel like they can open up their classrooms in ways that may not otherwise happen.[2]

For these workshops, and others, facilitators can take some time to co-create group norms. In the slides to follow we provide a few examples on how you may engage participants in this process and help them understand why norms are important.

Ultimately, even if you develop a strong set of norms, we encourage you to return to the norms briefly each time you meet and consider adding on to existing norms depending on the needs of the group.

One effective way to begin the process of developing norms is through a well-used protocol, Fears and Hopes.

- Fears and Hopes Protocol – School Reform Initiative

For other examples of how to build norms in your longer workshops, see:

- Co-Create Your Team Norms
- Forming Ground Rules
- Norms Construction – A Process of Negotiation – School Reform Initiative

Presenting Norms

Facilitators don't always need to create their own norms from scratch. In fact, mini-courses and single session workshops may not necessarily afford facilitators time to co-construct norms with participants. In these cases, we suggest choosing a set of norms that can support your participants in the type of learning and collaboration you are planning on doing. You can find several options in the slides that follow as well as a list of additional resources.

Even if you decide to use one of these suggestions, you may want to consider adding additional norms for any particular group. Asking a simple question such as, "Does anyone see something that may be missing?" provides teachers with the opportunity to contribute to these agreements and can promote buy-in.

Just as with PLTs, facilitators should keep norms visible and return to the norms as often as possible. Posting the norms in a central location or providing participants with a handout allows them to not only keep norms in mind, but also point to particular norms if they aren't being addressed.

For other examples of how to build norms in your longer workshops, see:

- The Norms Library | Elevate Your Facilitation
- Norms for LFSW Sessions
- Community Agreements – School Reform Initiative

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2 Horn, I. S. (2008). The inherent interdependence of teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(10), 751-754.

Online Professional Learning Spaces

While most of us have now spent a considerable amount of time in virtual learning spaces, facilitators should still take time to establish and return to norms for this particular type of space at the start of each virtual workshop.

The following resource can be adapted for your adult learning space and provides ideas for a variety of remote environments:

- Remote Learning Resource Setting Norms

Returning to Norms

After the norms have been established, it is important to make sure they remain visible and that you continue to support participants in practicing them. Tips for supporting these norms include:

- Post norms so they are visible during each session;
- Provide participants with a copy of the norms for reference; and
- Have participants choose a focus and return to this focus at the end of the session to consider how they did. Teachers can share with another member of the group about what was easy, difficult, and what they might try next time.

For tips on how to support norms for any workshop, see:

- Tips for Supporting Norms

Continued Learning

For more learning on what norms are and how they support professional learning spaces, see:

- The California Academy of Sciences: Norms for Professional Learning | Elevate Your Facilitation

For protocols and resources for developing norms, see:

- The National School Reform Faculty: Protocols – National School Reform Faculty
- School Reform Initiative: Norms – School Reform Initiative

Many books are also available to be checked out of the MƒA library. For suggestions, see The Facilitation Reading List.